



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

**Wildlife
Services**

FY 2004

WILDLIFE SERVICES—MISSOURI

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Missouri

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on Missouri Wildlife Services (WS) for help in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. WS' professional wildlife biologists respond to these requests with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts. WS works to protect property and reduce human health and safety risks at airports, schools, and along roadways. The program also protects people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases; guards many natural resources, such as fisheries and timber, from wildlife depredation; and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. Specific projects conducted by Missouri WS include, protecting human health and safety at airports, protecting crops from bird and rodent damage, surveillance and prevention of wildlife diseases (West Nile virus, Pseudorabies, etc.) and managing damage caused by beavers, pigeons, starlings, and other wildlife.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex



wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Wildlife Disease Surveillance—WS provides both technical and direct assistance to the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Corps of Engineers, and others in resolving problems with feral hogs and the threats they pose. Feral hogs are known carriers of pseudorabies and swine brucellosis, diseases that present significant risks to people and livestock.

Protecting Agricultural Crops—WS protects property and agriculture crops from wildlife damage, including levees destroyed by muskrats, rice crops destroyed by blackbirds, flooded crops and roads caused by beaver dams, and disease and predation at aquaculture facilities caused by fish eating birds.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—WS works to reduce aircraft/wildlife strikes by providing both technical and direct assistance at Missouri airports, using an integrated management approach. Since 1990, 19 civil airports in the State have recorded more than 500 wildlife strikes. The number of actual strikes is likely to be much greater since experts estimate that about 80 percent of bird strikes go unreported.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting property and crops from beaver damage
- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes
- Managing damage caused by pigeons, starlings, and blackbirds
- Managing damage caused by Canada geese
- Protecting property, livestock, and natural resources from feral hogs

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Missouri:

- Improving aquatic rodent damage management methods
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing bird damage to crops
- Evaluating waterfowl as disease and parasite reservoirs
- Improving methods to reduce damage due to large bird roosts

WS is currently managing wildlife damage at four civil airports and one U.S. Air Force base. These services range from conducting wildlife hazard assessments to developing a complete Wildlife Damage Management Plan. Habitat modification has been an integral tool used to reduce wildlife strikes. These modifications include implementing crop free zones within 2,000 feet of runways, removing trees, and constructing wildlife fences.

Protecting Public Health and Safety from Wildlife Disease—

WS cooperates with several State agencies to provide early detection of mosquito-born viruses, such as St. Louis Encephalitis and West Nile virus. WS has also been called upon to protect livestock and people from health threats related to captive wildlife and exotic animals. In addition, WS personnel actively participate on several wildlife boards, including the Feral Swine Task Force, the Governor's Task Force on chronic wasting disease (CWD), and the Council on Captive Wild and Exotic Animals.

Protecting Property—WS cooperates with property owners and industrial sites to protect private property from damage caused with large bird roosts and droppings associated with these roosts. The droppings cause excessive damage to paint and to metal structures and result in hazardous working conditions for employees that work at these sites.

Protecting Multiple Resources from Beaver Damage—WS works with farmers and drainage districts in SE Missouri to protect multiple resources from beaver damage. Beaver dams flood crops, roads, and prevent irrigation waters from reaching the crops. Beavers also cut down trees and some crop plants for food or for dam building.

Major Cooperators

- Missouri Department of Agriculture
- Missouri Department of Conservation
- Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
- Whiteman Air Force Base
- St. Louis-Lambert International Airport
- Kansas City International Airport

Looking to the Future

In Missouri, public safety is a concern for wildlife managers. This is particularly true at airports. Additional attention must be given to this very specialized area of work.

A second issue related to public safety and economic loss involves the increased need to manage feral hog populations to prevent the spread of disease to the domestic hog operations. Feral hogs compete with native wildlife for food and damage sensitive ecosystems. Feral hogs are considered an invasive species into the wild and should not be allowed to increase.

Missouri Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and Local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

